

# **Gateway Region Urban Sprawl: Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group**

**JUNE 29, 1999**

## **MEETING NOTES: Final**

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The notes provided below document the main points and meeting progress that were offered during the meeting on June 29, 1999. The notes highlight and summarize the key topics and issues that were discussed at the meeting. The following sections provide an overall summary of the meeting. Selected attachments are provided in this document.

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On June 29, 1999 a steering committee was convened to address the issue of sustainable growth in Metro East St. Louis. The meeting was held at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) building in Collinsville, Illinois. Of the six invited participants, four were in attendance. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had three representatives from the Region V, Chicago, IL offices. A list of attendees is provided in Attachment A. The meeting was scheduled for four hours. The purpose of the meeting was to agree upon a charge (mission) for the larger sustainable growth group and determine the next steps for the group. Also on the agenda was a status report regarding the East-West Gateway project to be presented by Judis Santos.

Mr. Tim Feather and Mr. Michael Beezhold, facilitators with Planning and Management Consultants, Ltd. (PMCL), began the meeting with introductions (e.g., name and affiliation) by the members of the steering committee and the EPA. Mr. Feather then provided the agenda for the meeting. The agenda is presented in Attachment B.

Mr. Andy Anderson, EPA representative, provided an overview of the EPA's role in Metro East St. Louis. He recognized that many entities, agencies, organization are interested in smart growth for the region. He noted that the steering committee was convened to address the proposed charge developed from the results of the previous sustainable growth meeting. A steering committee was identified in the hopes of making greater progress for the good of the group. He also noted the progress of the group to address stormwater issues in Metro East St. Louis. Lastly, he noted that the EPA doesn't have money to bring to the table but is able and willing to provide support such as the facilitation team to help the group in its efforts.

Mr. Feather presented the goal for the meeting.

“To determine a charge and direction for the conduct of the public group aimed at addressing sustainable growth in Metro East St. Louis.”

Mr. Feather presented the proposed charge for the sustainable growth group to the steering committee.

“The Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group is comprised of local, state, and federal organizations. Its mission is to gather and share information regarding growth issues in the Metro East, Illinois area.”

The charge focuses the group’s energies towards educating Metro East residents, policy makers, and planners about the importance of smart growth. A major issue of smart growth for the Metro East regions continues to be stormwater. Thus, a separate group has been organized to address this important issue.

### **Initial Discussion**

Mr. Jim Jones of East St. Louis noted that the sustainable growth group, once titled urban sprawl, has addressed the topic of a group mission with no success. He stated that he and his constituents are most concerned with the issue of flooding and the influence of stormwater. Mr. Jones stated that he felt strongly that residents must have behavioral changes to accomplish the goal of reduced flooding. He questioned whether the sustainable growth group was going to educate those who are flooded that they are flooded. The communities of the bluff region need to be educated and behaviors modified to make a difference.

Ms. Teresa O’Keeffe referred to the legislation being proposed regarding stormwater issues in Metro East St. Louis. However, the Home Builder’s Association has not been able to support the legislation. She did support the notion that all groups need guidelines (charge) to follow and commitment to follow it. In order to do this there must be trade-offs and compromise.

Mr. Jones noted that the Mayor of East St. Louis has not been able to support the stormwater legislation because it could possibly increase the tax burden on East St. Louis residents. He noted that these residents were some of the highest taxed in the region. Ms. Kehoe noted that she and the organization she represents are interested in preserving open spaces. Ms. Kehoe is disappointed with the current stormwater committee. She noted that they have done a lot of work with little progress. With respect to the stormwater legislation, Ms. Kathy Andria stated that a national law needed to be in place as opposed to state law to address stormwater issues. The group agrees that a primary issue is stormwater.

Despite the lack of progress in the past, the group continues to see opportunities for the sustainable growth group to make a difference in the region. One participant noted that Governor George Ryan has a state initiative to address smart growth. The steering committee understanding the proposed charge has a future focus of being instrumental in the development of a comprehensive plan for Metro East St. Louis.

Judis Santos was unable to attend the meeting to present the status report regarding the East-West Gateway project. The committee was asked what the East-West Gateway group was doing for the Metro East region. The members noted that much of the focus of East-West Gateway has been on issues in St. Louis and little on the Metro East. It was also noted that nothing that works for St. Louis would work for Metro East. Also, East-West Gateway has not shown much interest east of the Mississippi River. Thus, the East-West Gateway has lost its credibility with most Metro East communities.

### **The Charge**

Mr. Anderson asked the group to focus on the charge being proposed and provide any comments, edits, and/or additions. It was stressed that the focus of the charge was on education. It was noted that the title of the group was changed from urban sprawl to sustainable growth. Urban sprawl had a negative connotation and suggested growth was bad. Thus, the sustainable growth group would be a conduit of information regarding smart growth in Metro East. Mr. Anderson referred to a group called the Metro East Greenway Alliance (MEGA) and its mission. The MEGA is primarily interested in the preservation of open space. However, they represent many interests in one voice. The MEGA's focus is on the sharing of information.

Mr. Jones reiterated his statement earlier that education is not enough. He stated that the sustainable growth group needed to propose a plan with goals to shoot for in their efforts. The plan will be a document that is inclusive of concerns and will guide future activities. Ms. Andria agreed with Mr. Jones that the group must do more. The group must foster interchange among organizations and entities such as the Home Builder's Association and the Stormwater Management committee. An organization that has been helping communities with comprehensive plans is the Southwest Illinois Metropolitan Planning Commission (SWIMPAC). SWIMPAC developed a comprehensive plan for Edwardsville, IL. However, there is a cumulative effect with each community developing their own plan. Thus, there is a need for a regional plan. There has always been competition between the bluff and bottoms communities. The Southwest Illinois Development Association (SWIDA) was noted as being able to address the notion of a plan.

The committee noted that importance of public input into the plan. This input would include that of politicians as well as other stakeholders. The committee noted that

without buy-in by the stakeholders the plan would not be well received. The group asked the EPA what role they could take with regard to developing a regional plan. Mr. Anderson noted that the EPA could not steer local decisions. Again, the EPA can provide support through this process with the goal of eventually developing a regional plan. This in turn may place pressure on those with authority to take the plan seriously. The group agrees that they need to encourage smart growth through education with the ultimate goal of developing a regional plan. The members of the steering committee stated that they and the interests/constituents they represent would be willing to continue to participate in the sustainable growth group given the charge and direction provided at this meeting. The facilitation team members noted to the group that developing a regional plan is not a small effort.

The group, to encompass the notion of developing a regional plan, decided to reword the proposed charge slightly. The group noted that not only would they gather and distribute information regarding smart growth but would also develop additional information regarding the issue. Thus, the group would be responsible for gathering, developing, and disseminating information regarding smart growth. The steering committee agreed upon the revised charge for the sustainable growth group. The new mission is as follows:

“The Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group is comprised of local, state, and federal organizations. Its mission is to gather, develop, and disseminate information regarding growth issues in the Metro East, Illinois area.”

The committee noted that in order to address the idea of the regional plan they needed more input from local planners. Mr. Ted Shekell is a planner with the City of O’Fallon, Illinois. The EPA noted that he was originally going to attend the meeting but had an emergency to attend to. However, he will continue to be part of the steering committee. The group also stated that they needed to review the current comprehensive plans of communities in the Metro East region. Again, a planner would be able to help the group effectively and efficiently interpret the plans. An architect, John Hoag, who attended earlier sustainable growth meetings, was suggested to join the group. Mr. Hoag has been involved with other sustainable growth projects. . Ms. Rita Backstrom was also invited to attend the meeting. She was recognized as an important member of the steering committee. The group also noted that there were expertise and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and the University of Illinois.

## **Next Meeting**

The steering committee decided that the committee needed to meet again before presenting their results to the larger sustainable growth group. They noted that the steering committee size and membership was able to work efficiently together. However, the committee noted that they need some additional expertise such as Mr. Shekell.

Another individual to invite to the next meeting is Ed Weilbacher, representative of the Southwest Illinois Resource Conservation and Development Council. The committee agreed to review current comprehensive plans for those communities who are experiencing the greatest growth. The number of communities showing growth is approximately twenty to twenty-five. A member noted that this is a large number and the committee should start by reviewing county level plans, if available. Ms. O'Keeffe stated that she would bring the existing plans and associated maps to the next meeting. Ms. Andria would contact the Governor's Office to invite a representative to present the current administration plan for addressing smart growth. The committee also noted that the committee or the sustainable growth group needed to meet monthly. The EPA noted that request and is willing to support with facilitation by PMCL.

The next meeting is to be held on the afternoon of August 3, 1999 from 12:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. The meeting location is to be arranged. The EPA and PMCL would be responsible for developing the agenda based on the recommendations of the committee.

**Gateway Region Urban Sprawl:  
Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group**

**Attendance  
June 29, 1999**

**Members**

Carolyn Kehoe  
Sierra Club

James Jones  
East St. Louis Community Action Network (ESL CAN)

Teresa O'Keeffe  
Home Builders Association

Kathy Andria  
Conservation Alliance

**EPA: Region V**

Andy Anderson

Gordie Blum

Janet Haff

**Facilitation Team**

Timothy Feather  
Planning and Management Consultants, Ltd.

Michael Beezhold  
Planning and Management Consultants, Ltd.

## ***Meeting Agenda***

Gateway Region Urban Sprawl – Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group

June 29, 1999

8:00 am to 12:00 noon

IDOT Building Conference Room

Collinsville, Illinois

### **Meeting Goal**

To determine a charge and direction for the conduct of the public group aimed at addressing sustainable growth in Metro East St. Louis.

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>LEAD PLAYERS</b>
Welcome and Announcements	Tim Feather, Planning and Management Consultants, Ltd (PMCL)
Introductions	All
Role of Participants	Andy Anderson, EPA (V) All
Status of E-W Gateway Projects	Judis Santos, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council
Finalization of Proposed Charge *	Tim Feather All
Discussion of Selected Issues	Tim Feather All
Action Items/ Next Steps	Tim Feather
Meeting Closure	Tim Feather Andy Anderson

\* Proposed Charge: The Metro East Sustainable Growth Resources Group is comprised of local, state, and federal organizations. Its mission is to gather and share information regarding growth issues within the Metro East, Illinois area.

